

**Southern Company / Southern LINC
APEX Award “Detailed Document”**

**Southern LINC Helps Gulf Coast Weather Hurricane Ivan
*Communities rely on LINC for response, recovery and restoration***

Southern LINC, the wireless provider wholly-owned by Southern Company, was literally made for this. Southern LINC's wireless communication network (including 566 cell sites covering 127,000 square miles) is built to utility-grade specifications, including reinforced cell sites built to withstand sustained winds up to 100-120 mph, heavy rain and ice loads. Because when the weather is at its worst, Southern Company's utilities (Alabama Power, Georgia Power, Gulf Power, Mississippi Power and Savannah Electric) count on us to communicate while they work to repair damaged power lines and restore service. Other customers that utilize Southern LINC benefit from this reliability as well, including families, small businesses and government customers.

Southern LINC knows that communication is critical in any emergency situation. When it became apparent that Hurricane Ivan was going to have a huge impact on its service territory, Southern Company utilities and Southern LINC began planning and preparing for the worst. In anticipation of Hurricanes Charlie and Frances, Southern LINC fully fueled standby power generators at cell sites. Southern LINC also worked with public safety

agencies and the power utilities to determine storm emergency headquarter locations. In anticipation of increased call volume in these areas, Southern LINC added base radios at the nearby cell sites to boost capacity.

Southern LINC's customer support call center is located in Birmingham, Alabama, and they are dedicated to supporting customers 24/7, no matter the weather conditions. As Ivan was scheduled to approach central Alabama, customer support reps reported to work with sleeping bags and food rations. Customer Support managers also reserved hotel rooms in nearby hotels for employees, anticipating road closings and ensuring they could be close to the call center. The planning paid off, as heavy winds downed trees and a nearby creek flooded and travel was difficult. In addition to staffing the customer support center 24/7, a Customer Support representative was located in the Alabama Power Company Storm Center, and a Southern LINC technician "lived" at the State of Alabama EMA office in Clanton, AL



Picture taken by Southern LINC technician while in the field, refilling generators at cell sites.

Hurricane Ivan was the worst storm to ever hit Southern Company, far exceeding the damage caused by Hurricanes Camille, Erin or Opal. In total, more than 1.86 million of Southern Company's 4.1 million customers lost power. Gulf Power was hit the hardest, with more than 90% of the company's 405,000 customers losing power. In Alabama Power's territory, approximately 59% of customers lost power, and in Mississippi Power's territory less than half of the customers were without power. Thousands of power employees were quickly dispatched for restoration efforts.



Picture taken by Southern LINC technician while in the field, refilling generators at cell sites.

The Southern LINC wireless network sustained less damage than anticipated - all cell sites in the system remained standing, and none sustained serious damage. At the height of the storm, only 8% of cell sites temporarily lost connection to the network, primarily due to a fiber cut

outside of Southern LINC's network. Over 100 cell sites operated on generators and batteries. Southern LINC employees worked around the clock to restore communications. Additionally, public safety agencies, such as FEMA, activated hundreds of Southern LINC handsets to aid their emergency communication efforts.

A cell on wheels (COW) was transported and activated in Gulf Shores, one of the areas hardest hit by the storm. Southern LINC also utilized its relationships with public safety customers for escorts into damaged areas to quickly mobilize technicians, generators and other equipment. Service throughout the network was completely operational within 48 hours. Reports from some coastal areas indicate that Southern LINC was the only wireless communications carrier that remained up and running throughout the storm.

Supporting the Community During Storm Recovery

Hurricane Ivan was one of the worst national disasters to reach the Gulf Coast. As the power companies worked around the clock to restore power, Southern LINC worked to identify and replenish cell sites running on generators that were low on fuel.

In an effort to help residents notify friends and loved ones of their status, Southern LINC quickly re-opened sales offices in Pensacola and Fort Walton,

Florida, on the Sunday following Ivan, offering free long distance phone calls to all area residents. The next day, the offer was extended to Southern LINC sales offices in Mobile and Gulfport, Alabama, where free phone calls could be made between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm Monday through Saturday the entire two weeks following the storm.

The actual hurricane passed through in hours, but some estimate that it will take years for the Gulf coast to recover. Southern LINC continues to work with utilities and government agencies, such as AEMA, FEMA, the Alabama Highway Patrol and the Department of Public Safety, to provide communications where needed to aid their restoration efforts.

Going the Extra Mile to Make it Happen

All Southern LINC employees did whatever they could to help customers and co-workers during this time. However, employees who were located in the thick of it have the most dramatic tales of service and dedication. Sales representative Maxine Coats is one of many who worked around the clock to help those who needed it most.

When asked, Maxine will modestly tell you that she worked “about 16 hours a day, 7 days a week for 3 weeks following the hurricane.” In fact, her work

started the night before the hurricane hit, when the Orange Beach Police Department called her in preparation for the storm. Orange Beach currently had only three Southern LINC phones, and anticipated needing more – as soon as possible. Maxine said that as soon as she could move safely, she would see what she could do.

The hurricane came through Gulf Shores at 1:30 a.m., and then hit the area where Maxine lived at 3:30 a.m. All the while, Maxine kept in contact with her friends and customers via Southern LINC Instant LINC 2-way radio. As soon as the worst of the storm passed, Maxine fought gale force wind and drove gingerly toward Orange Beach to deliver on her promise.

As Maxine got closer to the Orange Beach/Gulf Shores area, the downed trees and flooding made travel more difficult. Maxine kept in constant contact with her public safety customers via Instant LINC, and assured them she was on her way albeit experiencing some roadblocks. Orange Beach Police responded by sending a police escort to enable Southern LINC delivery into the most ravaged areas. By 10:30 that morning, Maxine and her sales manager, Tammy Lambert, were delivering phones and accessories.

Using her SUV as a mobile Southern LINC store and customer support center, Maxine and Tammy delivered and hand-programmed phones until 10

p.m. that night. From Orange Beach, Maxine went straight to Baldwin County 911 to deliver 20 phones and hand-program an additional 20 phones. The next day it was determined that the Baldwin County 911 center needed additional coverage within their emergency operations center, and Maxine went to work with two Southern LINC service technicians to install a bi-directional antenna on the building. The installation effort continued until 2 a.m., but no one considered stopping until the job was done.

The phone programming process (which programs the phone number, group call capabilities and the phone book) is usually an easy process done in seconds by tethering the phone to a computer. However, due to the lack of electricity, the phones had to be programmed by hand. Despite this tedious process, Maxine and Tammy were not going to let a hurricane diminish their high standards for customer service or their dedication to doing whatever it took to aid public safety and restore communications for the community.

According to Maxine, “People were calling in left and right from volunteer fire departments, public safety and various search and rescue teams requesting phones. When we arrived to deliver the phones, our customers said that the LINC’s they had were their only means of communication.”

On average, Maxine made three trips a day from Mobile to pick up inventory, then back to Orange Beach area to deliver it to customers. The only deviation from this pattern was a trip to the Pensacola sales office to gather more inventory for distribution.

Beyond the Call to Reassure and Restore the Community

Due to her instrumental role in delivering communications to public safety, Maxine had clearance to areas that were blocked off to the public. Customers were anxious to know how their homes, cars and businesses weathered the storm, and called Maxine constantly to ask her to drive by and give them a report.

Jack Murphy is a long-time Southern LINC customer and owner of Alabama Charter Fishing in Orange Beach. Just days before the hurricane, Jack and Maxine had lunch together. Maxine said “if you need anything, just give me a holler,” and Jack did just that. Maxine picked through the debris to give Jack the full report on his marina. Maxine described, “My customers know I’m honest and I’ll tell them how it is. I didn’t sugar-coat it. And when I went to his marina, you could tell exactly what happened – it looked like 18-20 feet of water washed over everything. Basically, everything that was on the beach or canal had washed up onto his marina – dresser drawers, couches and other pieces of random furniture were lying around. Even other people’s

boats were wrapped around poles and his marina. Two ski boats that were laying up against his diesel tanks. I went inside and his computers were water-damaged. But here is the remarkable thing: all of his fishing pictures were still hanging on the wall, not even wet.”

After she went to his marina, Maxine visited Jack’s condo to survey the damage. She called Jack and asked, “Do you own a Jaguar? Because a crane dropped a generator on top of a Jag.” Fortunately for Jack, it was not his car.

Despite the devastating news about his marina, Jack was thankful for Southern LINC and Maxine. Jack said, “The only thing working were the LINC phones. We never lost communication, and I could keep in contact with my daughter and son-in-law during the storm. That kind of reliability is the reason I’ve been a customer for almost five years.”

Finally succumbing to her exhaustion, Maxine took a vacation day in November. Instead of spending it on the couch, she drove a enormous “thank you” cake to the customer support center in Birmingham. “It was the biggest sheet cake I ever saw in my life – it took up the whole back seat of my car,” Maxine recollects, “But I wanted to thank everyone for all they did during the hurricane. They really helped us pull through.”

After the hurricane, Southern LINC was flooded with testimonials about how Southern LINC was crucial after the storm. Two unscripted testimonials were used in TV spots. One spot featured Scott Laurent, a Southern LINC technician and the other featured Steve Allen, a Southern LINC customer and Cooperative Propane employee.

Scott Laurent, Southern LINC Technician

Unscripted testimonial used in TV Commercial

“We moved from the living room into here (indicates kitchen) because the reports I was getting over my Southern LINC phone said that we were going to get the eastern side of the storm, which is the worst part.

The next day, I came outside and nobody could talk to anybody. Southern LINC was the only service on the air. When word got out, people I didn’t even know were coming over to my house, knocking on the door and asking “Can I please use your Southern LINC phone? I want to use your phone to call home.”

Southern LINC really came through for my family, this neighborhood and the community.”

Steve Allen, Cooperative Propane Employee and Southern LINC customer
Unscripted testimonial used in TV Commercial

“Ivan was a storm like we’d never seen before. The only way to communicate was with Southern LINC. People from the Red Cross were calling in, contacting us so they could get propane power to carry out their relief work.

During the hurricane, my car charger went out. I called Bambi at Southern LINC and said, “Hey, can you get me a car charger?” She said, “I think I can do that!”

All in all, Southern LINC was there. Without that communications, we would not have been able to get out there and service the community like we did.”

Sample media coverage:



Officials critique Ivan response

Tuesday, November 30, 2004

Immediately after the storm, communications was a major stumbling block for recovery – both among emergency responders and between officials and the public.

“If you didn’t have a Southern LINC, I didn’t have contact with you at all,” [County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) director David] Jennings said.

The Brewton Standard

WEBJ Becomes Lifeline for Many

Wednesday, September 22, 2004

“With the help of Southern LINC, we were able to be in contact with all the people that could give us information,” [Dennis Dunaway of WEBJ Radio] added.

“We have been receiving information through the LINC and the phones have been ringing constantly.”

MOBILE REGISTER

Voices in the wilderness

Wednesday, September 29, 2004

In the first days after Hurricane Ivan hit south Alabama, many people in Escambia County had no electricity and no telephone service, and they searched through the static on battery-operated radios until they found one signal coming through loud and clear...

At WEBJ-AM radio, 1240 on the dial, owner Candy Cashman Smith and radio personality Dennis Dunaway fielded calls for aid and forwarded information over a mere 1,000 watts of power...

Dunaway and Smith stayed connected to listeners and emergency workers through a Southern LINC wireless phone, they said...

They referred people to the Red Cross, to FEMA and even helped some find workers to start the cleanup in their yards.

Southern LINC Timeline of Events:

September 14: Preparations for Ivan begin. Technicians fueled generators at cell sites, and LINC worked with government and Affiliate contacts to determine locations of storm centers. The Emergency Storm Team begins to convene twice daily for hurricane updates and strategies. Hotel reservations are made nearby the Customer Support call center, to ensure employees would be available to report to work if roads became blocked or flooded.

September 15: LINC works closely with Gulf Power, Mississippi Power, Alabama Power and Georgia Power to identify storm center locations and supporting cell sites. In anticipation of increased voice traffic, technicians add base radios at key cell sites near the storm centers.

It is also anticipated that customers will need extra phone batteries and car chargers. Inventory is pulled from the Atlanta warehouse and store locations in the northern territories, and driven to the Southern LINC storm headquarters in central Alabama.

Inventory is also evacuated out of stores in Pensacola, Mobile, Gulfport and Ft. Walton to prevent loss and damage, and stored in storm headquarters.

September 16: Hurricane Ivan hits, and over 100 cell sites switch to generator or battery power. During the height of the storm approximately 47 cell sites temporarily

lost connection to the network, primarily due to a fiber cut outside of Southern LINC's network.

September 17: Reports from some coastal areas indicate that Southern LINC is the only wireless communications carrier that remained up and running throughout the storm. Public safety agencies, such as FEMA, activate hundreds of Southern LINC handsets to aid their emergency communication efforts.

As soon as it was safe, Southern LINC also utilized its relationships with public safety customers for escorts into the damaged areas to quickly mobilize technicians, generators, a mobile cell site and other equipment.

September 17/18: The Southern LINC wireless network sustained little damage - all cell towers in our system remained physically intact. The sites affected by the fiber cut were completely operational within 48 hours. After all sites were re-connected to the network, the next high priority task was to identify and replenish cell sites running on generators that were low on fuel.

September 19: In an effort to help residents notify friends and loved ones of their status, Southern LINC re-opened sales offices in Pensacola and Fort Walton on Sunday, offering free long distance phone calls to victims of Hurricane Ivan. The offer was later extended to Mobile and Gulfport offices when they opened for business on Monday.

September 20 - Present: Southern LINC continues to work with Affiliates and government agencies, such as FEMA, Alabama Highway Patrol and

the Department of Public Safety, to provide communications where needed to aid their rescue and restoration efforts.

September 25: In anticipation of Hurricane Jeanne, extra accessories such as car chargers and batteries are shipped to the Savannah sales office.

September 26: Beginning at 11pm CST, an extra employee was employed at the Main Switching Office in Birmingham, the "nucleus" of the Southern LINC system, to monitor the network through Hurricane Jeanne. The Southern LINC network continues to physically stand up through Hurricane Jeanne's high winds; a number of sites continue to operate with generator power.

September 27: Only 11 sites currently operating on generator, and technicians are monitoring fuel levels and/or battery life and refuel power sources as necessary.

Ongoing: No matter what the weather, every cell site on Southern LINC's network is monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by a team of employees located in Birmingham, Alabama. Our full-time Customer Support employees, also located in Birmingham, also continue to support our customers 24/7. This kind of employee dedication ensures that we offer our customers one of the most reliable wireless systems in the world.